

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SJM 8004

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As of February 2, 2009

**Brief Description:** Requesting congress take action to maintain and develop a highly-skilled workforce in Washington.

**Sponsors:** Senators Shin, Kastama, Hobbs, Swecker, Schoesler, Morton, Berkey, McDermott, Jarrett, Oemig, Honeyford, Marr, McAuliffe, Tom and Pridemore.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Economic Development, Trade & Innovation: 2/03/09, 2/05/09.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE & INNOVATION

**Staff:** Philip Brady (786-7460)

**Background:** Domestic worker training programs are not producing enough qualified domestic workers to meet growing employer demands, particularly in highly-skilled trades. Sixty percent of surveyed employers in Washington reported difficulty in finding qualified workers in 2007.

The H-1B visa program is a non-immigrant status, employer-sponsored, temporary worker program for specialty occupations. Stays last from three to six years, and allow only employment by the sponsoring employer with some limited transferability. The program allows up to 65,000 visas for persons with education below a masters degree and an additional 20,000 for persons with a masters degree or higher. Persons working at a research university or nonprofit are not counted against the cap.

Approximately 125,000 H-1B visas were approved across all categories in fiscal year 2007. For fiscal year 2009, the quotas were filled by April 8, 2008.

In addition to filing fees, sponsoring employers (other than research universities or nonprofits) with 25 or fewer employees must pay a fee of \$750, and those with more than 25 must pay \$1,500. This money is used for domestic worker training programs.

**Summary of Bill:** Congress and the President of the United States are urged to increase the number of available H-1B visas and mandate that employers hiring through the H-1B visa program pay a fee of \$10,000 into a domestic training fund.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.